

**Vehicle door**

5 The invention pertains to a hollow-interior vehicle door consisting of an internal in its entirety essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure, and at least one outer panel element being supported by the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure, such as a outer door skin, and optionally an inner panel element, in which the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure serves to accommodate functional parts of the vehicle door, such as a hinge, hinge plate or other moving element and/or a closure element, which are or can be connected to the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure or are housed in it.

10 In conventional vehicle doors it is common to join a supporting and in its entirety essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure, a so-called inside panel, to the essentially lid-shaped outer panel by peripheral welding, flanging or adhesion, and to install the vehicle door in this state in the vehicle  
15 with the door opening to be closed, with or without functional parts such as lock, hinge, window lift and the like already installed in the support element. For some time, the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure has been provided on the inside of the vehicle with a closable service opening,

wherein an essentially flat lid extending essentially vertically closes said service opening. As a rule, this lid consists of thin plain sheet metal which is slightly formed to fit to the functional parts to be accommodated and which supports some of the functional parts, such as a window lift, a speaker and the like and which has a sealable fastening edge to be bolted to the actual essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure and to seal the service opening. The actual essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure consists of a so-called inside panel, which is shaped relatively extensively and forms both the inner side wall of the door interior featuring the service opening and running parallel to the door and the outward-extending side walls of the hollow door interior which extend in the direction perpendicular to the door, and which is permanently joined at its outer edge to the so-called outside panel forming the door skin by the aforementioned flanging process or the like.

Despite the considerable size of the service opening, assembly of the known vehicle door as well as service work require considerable effort, particularly with respect to the raisable and lowerable window panes, which are largely submerged in the door interior in the open state. The installation of a desirable second door seal, particularly in the form of a continuous peripheral gasket proves difficult and prone to malfunctions with the known vehicle doors.

Against this background, the invention is based on the object of achieving an easing of assembly for doors of this class and a vehicle door with a high rigidity, at the same time. Also desirable is an improved protection of the functional parts of the vehicle door against moisture.

This object is solved by a vehicle door with the characteristics of Claim 1.

The invention is accordingly based on the fundamental idea of designing the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure of the vehicle door in two parts in such a manner that the outer panel element is connected with a

frame-shaped first stiffening element whose frame-shaped connection edge to the second essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening element defines the access opening into the door interior, wherein the second stiffening element is essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped and supports functional parts of the vehicle door. The line of division of this at least two-part essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure thus lies in the area of the outward-pointing side wall of the door interior, as viewed in the direction perpendicular to the door.

Thereby the size of the service opening is expanded to a maximum and, in particular, the installation of a raisable and lowerable window pane is considerably simplified, as is any service or repair work.

It is possible to construct the at least two-part essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure in various ways for any concrete case. On the one hand, it is possible to fasten the hinge plates for the door hinges to the frame-shaped first stiffening element, as previously, thus to install the essential parts of the outer panel along with the actual setting, that is, the precisely positioned installation of the vehicle door in the vehicle opening to be closed off and to assemble the inner pot-shaped or pan-shaped part of the stiffening structure only after setting the door if desired. On the other hand, it is also possible, to mount nearly all the functional parts, i.e., the hinge plates of the hinges, the door lock, and also the possibly present raisable and lowerable window pane as well as any window frame that may be present, on the pot-shaped or pan-shaped part of the stiffening structure. Nonetheless, such a vehicle door according to the present invention can also be set in the conventional manner, that is, in the nearly completely assembled state, in which all that is missing is the possible inner panel.

With regard to the connection between the externally situated, first stiffening element of the stiffening structure and the outer skin of the door, both conven-

tional joining methods such as flanging and novel joining methods such as bonding with synthetics having a spacing effect are possible.

5 The connecting surfaces of the two parts of the essentially pot-shaped or pan shaped stiffening structure can extend both parallel to the door and in the normal direction to it. In the first, particularly preferred case, a fastening flange roughly parallel to the door and outward-pointing adjoins the lateral outward-pointing side walls of the pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening element, so that fastening means like rivets or bolts are applied perpendicular to the door. In an  
10 alternative arrangement of the connecting surface in a direction extending perpendicular to the door, the fastening means are applied roughly parallel to the door. Between these two extreme positions, intermediate positions of the connecting surfaces in any arbitrary angle between 0 and 90° to the door surface parallels are possible.

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It is possible within the scope of the invention, moreover, to arrange the connecting surfaces between the two parts of the stiffening structure at an arbitrary depth in the area of the outward-pointing side walls in relation to the normal direction of the outer door surface, that is to say, to arrange them both extremely close to the outer door skin and relatively far away from it towards the  
20 inside or in alterable depth. In each case, the pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening element has a not insignificant part, possibly even the predominant part, for the rigidity of the stiffening structure.

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The position of the connection line of the two parts of the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure has special meaning for an additional reason: due to the position of this connection line in the area of the outward-pointing side wall it becomes possible to use the connection area of the two parts of the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure to  
30 hold a door-side, in particular, wraparound second sealing line. Since the chassis-side door seal is ordinarily mounted relatively far in towards the vehicle

interior on an edge of the chassis, the further outward door-side sealing line creates a double seal as well as a cavity enclosed by the two seals. Thereby, not only the sealing function but also the sound damping of outside noise is considerably improved. The placement of the door-side sealing line in the connection area of the two parts of the essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped stiffening structure also makes it possible to cover the transition between the two parts of the stiffening elements, thus making it invisible, and also to seal it off. Likewise, a natural boundary is achieved between the door surfaces which are part of the exterior painting and the surfaces which belong to interior decoration.

By means of double-acting fastening means, such as threaded joint bolts with a head having an adhesive area for clamped application of the seal, not only is assembly made easier, but so is any later removal of the seal in case of repair or service work, as well as the reusability of the seal and the joint bolt.

The aforementioned components, as well as those claimed and those described to be used according to the invention in the embodiments, are not subject to any particular exceptional conditions regarding their size, design, material selection and technical conception, so that the selection criteria familiar in the field of application can be applied without restriction.

Additional details, characteristics and advantages of the object of the invention result from the subordinate claims as well as the description below of the associated drawing, in which, for the sake of example, a preferred embodiment of the vehicle door according to the invention is represented. Shown in the drawing are:

Figure 1 a first stiffening element of a right front vehicle door as part of the essentially pot-shaped or pan shaped stiffening structure with integrated window frame in a view looking in

from outside - schematically;

- 5                    Figure 2                    an outer panel element of the same vehicle door with a second stiffening element of the essentially pot-shaped or pan shaped stiffening structure in a view looking out from the inside;
- 10                   Figure 3                    the same vehicle door in a horizontal section along line III-III from Figure 1 and Figure 2, as well as parts of the vehicle chassis adjoining a door opening - in part;
- 15                   Figure 4                    a section through the same vehicle door along line IV-IV from Figure 1 and supplemented by parts of the chassis adjoining the vehicle opening - in part;
- 20                   Figure 5                    a section through the same vehicle door along line V-V from Figure 1 and Figure 2, as well as supplemented with parts of the vehicle chassis adjoining the door opening - in part;
- 25                   Figure 6                    a section through the same vehicle door along line VI-VI from Figure 1 and supplemented with the so-called B-pillar and a part of the rear vehicle door on the same side - in part;
- 30                   Figure 7                    a section through the same vehicle door along line VII-VII from Figure 1 and Figure 2 as well as supplemented with the so-called B-pillar and a part of the rear vehicle door on the same side - in part; as well as

Figures 8A-D      alternative embodiments of the seal arrangement of the right front vehicle door in the area underneath the window sill, in horizontal section.

5      For the vehicle door according to Figures 1 and 2, an outside panel element in the form of a so-called outside panel 10 forming the outer skin of the door is stiffened on its inner side shown in Figure 2 by a frame-shaped first stiffening element 12 at the outer peripheral zones of the outside panel, the connection between the two components being accomplished by a flanged joint 10A in  
10      conventional manner. The design of the frame-shaped first stiffening element 12 will be explained further in conjunction with Figures 3-8.

The second part of the stiffening structure, referred to as a second stiffening element 14, visible in Figure 1, consists overall of one essentially pot-shaped or pan-shaped component, punched in one piece from sheet metal and shaped  
15      by deep drawing. Its heart consists of a roughly pot-shaped or pan-shaped part 14A and a window frame part 14B. The pot-shaped or pan-shaped part 14A has a bottom surface 14A' which has cutouts 16 for the installation of a window-lift motor, a loudspeaker or the like. At the periphery of the bottom surface  
20      14A' it is adjoined by circumferenced side walls 14A'' in an extension direction running roughly perpendicular to the door plane. These will become more clearly recognizable in conjunction with the figures below. Adjoining the side walls 14A'' are, in turn, flange-like, and outward-pointing connecting surfaces  
25      12A of the stiffening element 12, fastening holes 18A permit a detachable bolting of the two stiffening structure parts 12 and 14, as will become more evident from subsequent figures. The second stiffening element 14 serves among other things for the mounting of a door lock 22.

30      A box sheet 22A being one piece, for instance, optionally provided on the first stiffening element 12, and having peripheral sealing lips 22B, permits a com-

plete encapsulation of the door lock 22 in the assembled state by contacting the sealing lips 22B with the bottom surface 14A' of the second stiffening element 14. The sealing line 22C is indicated with dots and dashes in Figure 1.

- 5 As an additional functional part, the second stiffening element 14 bears a raisable window pane 26. For the sake of clarity, the conventionally known lifting mechanism is not separately illustrated.

10 The pot-shaped or pan-shaped structure of the part 14A of the second stiffening element 14 is clearly evident from Figure 3, in particular, the outward-pointing side walls 14A'' and the adjoining connecting surfaces 18 projecting outwards like flanges. It is likewise evident that the height of the side walls 14A' can be different in different areas of the second stiffening element 14, that is to say, the connection line to the stiffening element 12 can be a different  
15 distance from the outer sheet 10, i.e., the outer skin of the door, according to technical and mechanical circumstances. Thus, in the embodiment illustrated in Figure 3, the encapsulated door lock 22 with its lock reinforcement sheet 22D is fastened to the second stiffening element 14, while the opposing door hinge part 24 is fastened to the first stiffening element 12.

20 It can also be seen from Figure 3 that in the present embodiment the first stiffening element 12 as the outside-facing part of an ordinary inside door sheet, can be joined to the outside panel. However, the first stiffening element 12 is provided with an inward-pointing frame-shaped flange with connecting surfaces  
25 18' and running roughly parallel to the door. These and the associated fastening holes 18A correspond to the connecting surfaces 18 and the associated connecting holes 12A of the second stiffening element 14 and allow a non-positive threaded fastening of the two stiffening structure parts 12 and 14 by means of connecting bolts 28.

30 Alongside the driving flats 28A' for a spanner, the heads 28A of the connecting



bolts 28 have clamping surfaces 28" in the form of a continuous peripheral groove. In this way, a clamped connection to the peripheral hollow-chamber profiled piece (profiled seal 32) described below becomes possible (Figure 5) in sense of a second function of the heads 28A.

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As is evident from Figures 3-8, the connection point between the stiffening structure elements 12 and 14, as shown in the drawings and in that sense preferred, is covered and sealed off by a continuous peripheral profiled seal 32. This profiled piece represents a "natural" visual boundary between the first stiffening element 12, possibly painted the vehicle color and the second stiffening element 14, possibly painted a neutral color, for instance, the color of anthracite. The main function of this profiled seal is the realization of a second sealing line situated far to the outside. In contrast to the known chassis-side first seal (profiled seal 34), this one is fastened towards the door and permits the formation of a continuous peripheral sealed chamber 38 between the vehicle door 1 and the vehicle chassis 2. A third sealing line 36, as shown in Figures 6 and 7, may be desirable, for instance, between adjacent doors. A uniform course of the profiled seal 32 free of undulations, as well as easy detachability in case of repair or service and easy installation are achieved by a spring clip 32A inserted into a bottom groove of the profiled seal 32, which enables a clamped connection of the profiled seal 32 to the clamping surfaces 28A" of the connecting bolts 28.

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In all of Figures 3-8D the seals used are each shown in the relaxed state, even if the concretely illustrated installation position causes a deformation of the seal. Thereby the seals illustrated in this manner cut the adjacent component instead of clinging tightly to it. This mode of illustration is done only for the sake of simplicity. Cross-hatching of the sections is likewise omitted for the sake of clarity.

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It is evident from Figure 4 that the second stiffening element 14 in the embodi-

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ment illustrated here is also provided with a window frame part 14B which bears a pane guide/seal 40 for the raisable and lowerable window pane 26. The door-side profiled seal 32 is joined in this area to the second stiffening element 14 by a conventional double-sided adhesive tape 32B.

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The so-called rocker panel area of the vehicle door 1 can be seen in Figure 5.

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In Figure 6, the vehicle door 1 is shown in the area of the so-called B-pillar 42 above the sill line. Here too, the profiled seal 32 is joined to the window frame part 14B by double-sided adhesion. The rear vehicle door 1' is constructed in a similar manner to the front vehicle door 1.

Figure 7 shows the door situation at the B-pillar 42 below the sill line.

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Figure 8 shows four variants for the connection of the two stiffening structures 12 and 14 and for the arrangement, fastening and shaping of the second sealing line, wherein for similar components the same reference numerals are used again.

List of reference numerals

	1	Vehicle door
	1'	Rear vehicle door
5	2	Vehicle chassis
	10	Outside panel
	10A	Bead
	12	First stiffening element
	12A	Fastening holes
10	14	Second stiffening element
	14A	Pot-/pan-shaped component
	14A'	Bottom surface
	14A''	Side walls
	14B	Window frame
15	16	Cutouts
	18	Connecting surfaces
	18'	Connecting surfaces
	18A	Fastening holes
	20	Sill reinforcement
20	22	Door lock
	22A	Box sheet
	22B	Sealing lips
	22C	Sealing line
	22D	Lock reinforcement sheet
25	24	Hinge part
	26	Window pane
	28	Bolts
	28A	Bolt head
	28A'	Driving flat
30	28A''	Clamping surface
	30	Inside panel

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- 32 Second profiled seal  
32A Spring clip  
32B Double-sided adhesive strip  
34 First profiled seal  
5 36 Third sealing line  
38 Hollow chamber  
40 Pane guide/seal  
42 B-pillar

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